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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 JERUSALEM 000314

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/23): PALESTINIANS SEE
"DANGER" IN JERUSALEM EVICTIONS

Main Stories:

All papers lead with a photo and a report on a "raid" by Israeli
Jerusalem municipal authorities on residents of Silwan's Bustan
an

neighborhood in East Jerusalem, during which ultimatums were issued
that 80 houses, built without Israeli permits, be vacated ahead of
demolitions to make way for a public park. Papers note that 1,500
Palestinians currently live where the park will be built, in an area
built before 1967 when Israel first "occupied East Jerusalem."
Ahmad Ruwaydah of the Palestinian Authority (PA)President's office
called an emergency meeting to discuss the development and called it
a, "dangerous escalation." Papers also report that PA spokesperson
Hatim Abdul Qader called the action illegal and aimed at changing
the demographic balance in Jerusalem.

Orders to Palestinian residents to vacate 32 houses in Tana village
near Nablus were issued by Israeli authorities on February 22,
according to Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages. Israeli forces
warned that the Palestinians risk confiscation of their property and
cattle, as well as fines, should they fail to evacuate the area
within 70 hours, according to coverage.

All front pages continue weekend reporting on Palestinian
reconciliation talks that are expected to begin in Cairo on February
25, with the exact date still being discussed by Palestinian
factions. The report adds that Egypt has sent a paper of "dialogue
principles" to the factions and awaits their final confirmation to
attend the talks. Meanwhile, Al Quds' reports on Palestinian
Authority (PA)President Abbas' visit to Prague where he reiterated
calls for a PA national consensus government.

Israel's Premier Olmert is counting on Hamas wanting to finalize
prisoner exchange and truce agreements with Israel before a new

Israeli Premier assumes office, according to a DPA report on Al Quds' front page. The report adds that Olmert wants the crowning achievement of bringing kidnapped Israeli soldier Shalit home before ending his term in office.

Al Ayyam's and Al Quds' front pages run a Reuters report on two Arab League needs assessment missions entering Gaza that will also investigate war crimes. Meanwhile, Al Ayyam's and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages report on a new Gaza reconstruction fund to be established by the Gulf Cooperation Council with open membership for all Arab countries. Finally, all papers report that Amnesty International has accused Israel and Hamas of committing war crimes in Gaza and has called for an arms embargo on the two parties.

Al Quds' front page reports that Egypt opened the Gaza Rafah crossing for a second day on February 22 following its promise to keep the crossing open for three days to facilitate the travel of students and humanitarian cases.

Al Quds' runs an inside DPA report about meetings between U.S. Senator Lieberman and Israeli party leaders Netanyahu, Livni and Lieberman. Senator Lieberman is quoted saying that the American and Israeli positions on Iran are similar. Israeli Beiteinu's Lieberman told his guest that new ideas are needed regarding Israeli-Palestinian negotiations after their failure to make progress for so many years, reporting notes.

Weekend Stories:

Sunday, February 22

"The European Union condemns continued settlement activities and considers them a significant obstacle to peace," according to lead

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Main Stories:

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headlines in all dailies. Papers note that the Palestinian presidency welcomed the February 21 EU statement that called settlement activities a violation of international law and inconsistent with commitments made at Annapolis and under the Road Map. Papers also noted that PLO chief negotiator Erekat met with visiting Senator Lieberman and U.S. Consul General Walles on February 21 and informed them that Palestinian will not agree to negotiations as long as settlement activities continue.

Senator John Kerry's meeting with Syria's Al Asad was front page news in Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida. The article gives an extensive read-out of the Senator's comments on his trip to Syria.

Al Quds continued its inside reporting from February 21 on the Kennedy Center's Arabesque festival, detailing at length the participation by Palestinian and regional artists.

Saturday, February 21

Senator Kerry's exclusive interview with Al Quds featured on the daily's front page. The headline highlights Kerry's comments that, "Israel must freeze settlement activities and [Israeli development of] E1 is rejected by the U.S.- I carry a letter from Hamas and the two-state solution is the only viable option." Kerry stated that he visited refugee camps in Gaza and met with Palestinian refugees to learn about humanitarian conditions there. In response to a question about whether he carried a letter from Hamas to President Obama, Kerry reportedly said, "I have delivered to the appropriate diplomatic channels, and that letter will be appropriately handled

through the diplomatic process."

"Mitchell refuses Netanyahu's economic program and encourages the formation of a Palestinian unity government that does not obstruct peace," according to Al Ayyam's front page. The paper reported extensively on Mitchell's digital video conference "with Jewish groups in the United States."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Silwan... a dangerous development!!"(02/23): "It's clear that this dangerous process is a grave violation of international law and conventions... If anyone had pinned their hopes on the new U.S. administration... working [to revive the peace process], this step [to evict residents from 80 houses in East Jerusalem], in addition to other Israeli steps in Jerusalem, acts to fully block the path of any peace talks and proves that Israeli governments... are united in their intent to sabotage peace efforts... the question is... what will [the EU] do to remove this obstacle?... the same question goes for the new U.S.

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administration."

2) Khalid Hroub writes in Al Ayyam under the title, "a new British foreign policy"(02/23): "Britain is the party that is first and foremost responsible for the Palestinian catastrophe and should be first and foremost responsible for putting an end to it. In the 21st century, where globalization ...is at the core of international politics, there is no longer room for hesitant, cowardly or hypocritical policies."

WALLES